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THE ALDINE.

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PERADVENTURE.

I AM thinking to-night of the little child
That lay on my breast three summer days,
Then swiftly, silently, dropped from sight,
While my soul cried out in sore amaze.

It is fifteen years ago to-night;
Somewhere, I know, he has lived them through,
Perhaps with never a thought or dream
Of the mother-heart he never knew!

Is he yet but a babe? or has he grown
To be like his brothers, fair and tall,
With a clear bright eye, and a springing step,
And a voice that rings like a bugle call?

I loved him. The rose in his waxen hand
Was wet with the dew of my falling tears;
I have kept the thought of my baby's grave
Through all the length of these changeful years.

Yet the love I gave him was not like that
I give to-day to my other boys,
Who have grown beside me, and turned to me
In all their griefs and in all their joys.

Do you think he knows it? I wonder much
If the dead are passionless, cold and dumb;
If into the calm of the deathless years
No thrill of a human love may come!

Perhaps sometimes from the upper air
He has seen me walk with his brothers three;
Or felt in the tender twilight hour
The breath of the kisses they gave to me!

Over his birthright, lost so soon,
Perhaps he has sighed as the swift years flew;
O child of my heart! you shall find somewhere
The love that on earth you never knew!

—Julia C. R. Dorr.

EBENEZER ELLIOTT.

EBENEZER ELLIOTT, the "Corn-Law Rhymer," as he loved to be called, is not so well known in this country as he deserves to be, although, some years ago, a Philadelphia house published an edition of his poems, which introduced him at once to the most cultivated people among us, and won for him both their esteem and admiration. Popularly speaking, however, he is nearly out of court, and the mention of his name brings with it no response from the common heart. We regret this all the more, because he was emphatically the Poet of the People; and, during a long life in the land of "palaces and paupers," he never for a moment lost sight either of his own mission, or of the wrongs and sufferings of the poor, "whom," says James Montgomery, "if not always wisely, I at least dare not say that he loved too well." How indeed could he? He sprang from the people, and dwelt among them to the last—identifying himself with all their movements for education and a larger liberty, sympathizing with them in their sorrows, troubles and sufferings, as well as in the few rejoicings that fell to their lot; and a large number of his best descriptive pieces, and his most touching and pathetic verses, are devoted to their weal and encouragement.

In this country we can hardly understand these things—nor why there should possibly be any need for the poor mechanic and factory worker to have a self-appointed Poet Laureate to sing for them—to flood them with great and ennobling ideas of freedom and of virtue, while he denounced their oppressors. This country is, happily, the Paradise, and England, unhappily, is the Purgatory of labor. In the most prosperous times the ordinary English artisan does not receive as much wages in a week as the American receives in a couple of days; and it is no uncommon thing, as I can sorrowfully testify, for thousands to be broken upon the wheel of starvation every other day, during periods of commercial disaster.

It was the knowledge of this fact, and the dreadful sufferings which Elliott himself witnessed, for many years, in the great overgrown village of Sheffield, which finally stung him into open revolt, of song and speech, against the working of the "iniquitous Corn Laws," which, as he most devoutly believed, were the chief, if not the only cause of the continual depressions in trade, and the consequent miseries of the

working classes. He resolved, therefore, to fight against these laws, in the interests of humanity; for he knew if they were once abolished that bread would be cheap, and flesh and blood dear—thus reversing the old order—and that a free trade with all nations would entail a blessing upon all nations, and lay the foundations for universal peace and amity, as well as a world-wide Christian civility.

It is curious that, although there is no recent collection of poems, either in this country or in England, which does not contain specimens of Elliott's best descriptive pieces; yet every one of these able and judicious editors has ignored the "Corn-Law Rhymes," as if the taint of politics had vitiated the poetry; as if politics, indeed, could not be exalted into the regions of poetry, even when an artist so confessedly skillful as the "Corn-Law Rhymer" had the handling and the fashioning of them. But it is all a mistake. I will venture to say, that there are few modern poems so full of power, melody, and brilliant diction as the "Rhyme" which first brought him into prominent notice, and which he calls "The Ranter." The present Lord Lytton, *ex* Sir Edward Bulwer, chanced to get possession of the "Corn-Law Rhymes," including this piece, when the book first appeared, and was so utterly astounded by the genius and art which they displayed, that he resolved to call the attention of the Poet Laureate, Robert Southey, to their "extraordinary merits." Elliott had previously published three or four regularly mounted poems under his own name, and they fell dead from the press. Little or no notice was taken of them; and although, as Southey says, they were full of talent, and that the higher he pitched his keys the better he succeeded; and, further, that there were passages in them which have, perhaps, no superior; yet, while writing these elaborate poems, he was merely preparing himself to become an artist, and was not at that time a master of composition, but "an aspirant," although he says there "are few in the three kingdoms, and America to boot, who can write as well" as Elliott, "when he writes his best." But he adds, justly enough, that the best of these "are full of heterogeneous materials, like the image of the King of Babylon's dream, and the clay and the brass are in greater proportion than the precious metals." Bulwer was misled by the authorship of the "Corn-Law Rhymes," which professed to be written by a mechanic, and he introduced them to the Laureate by a well written and eloquent letter in the *New Monthly Magazine*, believing at the time that the author was an uneducated man. He says in it, that he does not know if the author be young or old, but if the former, then he has given evidence of a talent, such as very few, even in this age—an age wronged and unappreciated—could hope to aspire to.

I have spoken thus in detail, because the history of these "Rhymes" is as little known as the "Rhymes" themselves, which last are so worthy of being known. I should like, before making any quotations from them, to give, if possible, a picture of the workmen's homes, as they existed in Elliott's time, that the poems might be understood better. Old Country men will understand them well enough, but our own American workmen will hardly comprehend them without that picture preface. Imagine, then, a great sprawling village; the outskirts wide open fields, extending to the contiguous moors, and watered by becks, with many beaten paths on their banks, and intersecting the fields far and near; while in the background loom the blue, dumb mountains, and all the mighty distance between them and these outskirts is covered with broom and heather, with many a romantic ravine intervening, through which rolls many a beautiful rivulet, every one of which Elliott has celebrated in his poems. It is the most wild, savage, barren, and yet the most beautiful, and here and there the most sublime land-roll of scenery which is to be found in Yorkshire. The smoke of blast-furnaces, and the rattling and creaking of numerous mill-wheels, salute you long before the outskirts are reached; and the curious visitor may enter the precincts of the grinders' shops, and see the process of the steel manufacture into all kinds of cutlery. Here is a row of men in their shirt sleeves, black with soot and sweat, fashioning long blades of steel into knives, and making the air dissonant with the harsh grating and almost shrieking of the metal upon the grindstones. The grinders are the best paid of all men connected with the trade, making in four days' work, which is all they will do, from four to five pounds a week. The unskilled workmen hardly make enough to keep body and soul together, and these are the men who suffer, with their wives and children, so fearfully when

there is any suspension of work. Their homes, at the time I am now speaking of, were mere hovels—an old deal table, a couple of broken chairs and a three-legged stool constituting their chief household furniture in the "room." A black iron pot hangs from a horizontal iron bar in the chimney, and, in good times, there is generally a good fire under it; in bad times none at all, and no food. A bed of straw in a canvas sacking is all they have to sleep on; and parents and children often sleep in the same bed when it is possible. When work is plentiful, there is, at supper time—say from about six o'clock to half-past—the odor of roast pork on the air from scores of these miserable dwellings; and barefooted children, half naked, roll about the dusty sidewalk, or squat on the threshold, eating huge lumps of bread, which they throw away as soon as their appetites are appeased. This waste is so common and universal, that I have tracked the same all over the neighborhood. But when there is no work, and the poor bread-winner for the family has to depend upon the charity of those who may chance to be employed, or upon the townspeople, there is no waste then. Every crumb is hoarded, but often to no kind of purpose, and there is nothing for it but starvation. Children die when there is no food for them to eat, as well as grown-up people; and here is one of Elliott's pieces over a starved child, killed by the Bread Tax, as he said:

SONG.

I.

Where the poor cease to pay,
Go, loved one, and rest.
Thou art wearing away
To the land of the blest.
Our father is gone
Where the wronged are forgiven,
And that dearest one,
Thy husband, in heaven.

II.

No toil in despair,
No tyrant, no slave,
No bread tax is there
With a maw like the grave;
But the poacher, thy pride,
Whelmed in ocean afar,
And his brother, who died
Land-butchered in war;

III.

And their mother, who sank
Broken-hearted to rest;
And the baby, that drank
Till it froze on her breast;
With tears and with smiles
Are waiting for thee,
In the beautiful isles,
Where the wronged are the free.

IV.

Go, loved one, and rest
Where the poor cease to pay!
To the land of the blest
Thou art wearing away;
But the son of thy pride
Shall yet stay with me,
And poor little Jane,
Look sadly like thee.

One more example, and I will turn from Elliott's poetry to Elliott himself.

SONG.

Child, is thy father dead?
Father is gone!
Why did they tax his bread?
God's will be done!
Mother has sold her bed;
Better to die than wed!
Where shall she lay her head?
Home we have none!

Father clammed twice a week,
God's will be done!
Long for work did he seek;
Work he found none!
Tears on his hollow cheek
Told what no tongue could speak;
Why did his master break?
God's will be done!

Doctor said air was best,
Food we had none.
Father, with panting breast,
Groaned to be gone;
Now he is with the blest—
Mother says death is best;
We have no place of rest—
Yes, ye have one!

Bulwer's introduction of these poems to the public, through the *New Monthly Magazine*, soon gave them a wide popularity. They appeared in a paper cover, price nine pence; and the presumption was that the